



APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

If you wish to apply to direct a workshop at the Joint Sessions in Münster, Germany during 22-27 March 2010, please first see the explanatory notes, then complete this form, which will serve as the **cover sheet** for your workshop proposal. This form should be sent with your **workshop proposal** to the ECPR Central Services. You can do this by emailing both documents as an attached file (in word format .doc or rich text format .rtf) to the ECPR Central Services at ecpr@essex.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can print up the information and send it as a fax to the Central Services, fax: +44 1206 872500. **The deadline for applications is Sunday, 01 February 2009.**

Title of proposed workshop: Personality and Voter Turnout

Subject area: Political behaviour, political psychology

Abstract of proposed workshop. Maximum of 250 words (suitable for publication in the academic programme leaflet and on the ECPR web site):

Personality is a consequential source of individual differences. Personality traits have been identified that shape a wide range of facets of a person's life across an impressive variety of contexts. Recently, some suggestive evidence has been gathered that supports the notion that personality traits are linked to many aspects of political behavior. The empirical link is comparable in importance to that of classical socio-demographic or attitudinal factors. However, research on the impact of personality on voter turnout and political behavior is at its infancy and the number of empirical studies addressing this question is limited. This workshop aims to provide an appropriate setting to discuss this exciting new topic in a comprehensive way. We are especially interested in papers that address the following questions: 1) Which personality traits influence voter turnout and political participation? 2) How is personality related to other explanatory factors of electoral participation, such as political attitudes? 3) How does personality interact with contextual factors? 4) How should explanatory models of electoral and political participation including personality be specified? This workshop is supported by the ECPR Standing Group on Public Opinion and Voting Behaviour in Comparative Perspective

Name of workshop director(s):

Aina Gallego

André Blais

Name and address of institution(s):

Institut de Govern i Polítiques Públiques
politique

Département de science

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Université de Montréal

Mòdul de Recerca A, Primera planta, UAB

C.P 6128, succursale Centre-ville

08193 Bellaterra, Spain

H3C 3J7 Montréal, Canada

Telephone number/s:

00 34 93 586 8805

00 1 514 343 7349

Fax number/s:

00 34 93 581 2439

001 514 343 2360

E-mail address/s:

aina.gallego@uab.cat

andre.blais@umontreal.ca

Please note that the information above is VERY important, as it will be used in all future correspondence and, if the proposal is successful, printed in the academic programme.

The proposal should be typed with 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the explanatory notes/guidelines available on the ECPR website at www.ecprnet.org.

For further information, please contact:

Sandra Thompson, Joint Sessions Coordinator & Managing Administrator, ECPR Central Services, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, Essex UK.

Email: ecpr@essex.ac.uk; Tel: +44 1206 872501; Fax: +44 1206 872500

PERSONALITY AND VOTER TURNOUT

Aina Gallego and André Blais

Workshop description

Many individual characteristics have been identified which influence voter turnout. In spite of this, explaining why people decide to participate or not to participate in political activities is an elusive subject. Common models of political behavior only explain a relatively small portion of the variance observed in this phenomenon. Part of the failure to understand voter turnout is surely due to the unpredictability of human nature. However, models of participation can be enriched. One way to do this is to identify potentially relevant elements that have not yet been studied carefully. These include genetics, social networks, and personality.

The term personality refers to the fact that people have different, relatively stable characteristics that influence their perceptions and behaviors. One of the most widely accepted models is the big five factor model, which advocates that individual personality differences can be grouped into five basic dimensions: openness or intelligence, consciousness, extroversion, neuroticism and agreeableness (see, for example, John and Srivastava 1999). These traits are related to many different aspects of life, such as job performance or mental illness (Barrick and Mount 1991, Saulsman and Page 2004). Other relevant dimensions have been proposed, but the five factor model captures a large part of individual differences (Saucier and Goldberg 1998).

Extensive research in social psychology has focused on understanding the origins of political values, attitudes and beliefs. Political values and attitudes can be partially attributed to psychological traits. For example, psychological traits are linked to political liberalism and conservatism. In a review of 88 studies carried out in 12 countries, Jost et al. (2003) find support for the theory that people who adopt a conservative ideology differ from liberals in the following aspects: they are more dogmatic and less tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty, they have less integrative complexity, they are less open to experience, and they have a stronger need for order, closure and structure. However, these findings are not uncontroversial. Alford and Hibbing (2007) propose an alternative framework in which it is necessary to distinguish between political, personal and interpersonal temperaments. In empirical analyses, personality traits are found to be only weakly related to political attitudes.

If political attitudes are shaped by personality, it is plausible that political behavior is likewise influenced. However, the importance of personality traits in electoral and political participation is

mostly unexplored. Some recent research has addressed this particular issue, with interesting but somewhat contradictory results.

Mondak and Halperin (2008) examine the relationship between the big five personality factors and various forms of participation. People who score high in agreeableness report voting less often. Extroversion and agreeableness are associated with increased participation in such activities as attending meetings, signing petitions or contacting officials. Conscientious people are more likely to attend meetings and contact officials, and people who are more open to experience speak more frequently in meetings. In addition, personality traits are found to influence a wide range of political attitudes and other behaviors such as news consumption and political discussion. Denny and Doyle (2008) use a British panel study to analyze the impact of personality on voter turnout. Three individual traits affect the probability of voting: aggressive, even-tempered and hardworking people vote more often. Personality traits are also related to vote choice. In Italy, people with high scores of openness to experience and friendliness vote for the left, and people high in conscientiousness vote for right-wing parties (Caprara et al. 2006).

A number of factors which can be broadly classified as personality traits, or as manifestations of them, have been identified that shape voter turnout and political participation. Patience increases the propensity to vote, presumably because patient people are more willing to make the effort to vote, even if the benefits in the form of public policies are received later (Fowler and Kam 2006). Altruism or caring about the benefits of others also fosters voter turnout (Fowler 2006). Conflict avoidance is negatively related to participation in some political activities (Ulbig and Funk 1999; Mutz 2002). People who are more willing to censor their potentially controversial opinions are less likely to participate in politics, particularly in polarized political contexts (Hayes, Scheufele and Hughe 2006). These findings are consistent with the notion that people who are conscientious, extroverted and not very agreeable participate more frequently in politics.

To sum up, personality traits have been found to influence voter turnout and political participation, although the evidence is still scarce and more research needs to be done to fully understand which traits are important, how personality operates to shape politically relevant attitudes, and how its impact interacts with contextual factors. This workshop is intended to provide an opportunity to discuss this new topic and to contribute to making political scientists more familiar with personality research. This will be an optimal setting to advance knowledge concerning the link between personality and voter turnout. The focus of the workshop will be on voter turnout, but papers addressing the impact of personality on other forms of participation are also welcome.

The main research questions that will be addressed in the workshop are:

- Which personality traits influence voter turnout? Which personality traits influence political participation?
- Which political attitudes link personality to political behavior?
- Are the effects of personality the same in different contexts? Do personality traits only matter under certain conditions? Which conditions?
- How are personality traits related to classical predictors of electoral and political participation? How should explanatory models of voter turnout and political participation including personality be specified?

Relation to recent research, funding and dissemination

A few articles on the impact of personality on political behavior have been published recently in international journals such as the *British Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, *Political Behavior*, *Political Psychology* and the *Annals of the American Academy of Political Science*. In addition, research projects on this issue are underway and we expect that quite a few papers on personality and politics will be published in the near future, as interest in political psychology is rapidly growing within the discipline.

If the workshop is accepted, the directors will apply for funding to the Eurocores Program of the European Science Foundation and the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship at McGill University. After evaluating the papers, the workshop directors may propose a special issue on personality and voter turnout to a specialist journal such as *Political Psychology*.

Type of papers encouraged and participants

The workshop will welcome theoretical and empirical papers that contribute to a deeper understanding of the effects of personality and personality traits on voter turnout and participation. We expect to gather a number of papers which use data on similar research questions generated by survey research in a variety of contexts. In addition, alternative research designs, including data gathered with qualitative methods and laboratory experiments, are encouraged.

We aim to attract a group of both seasoned and young scholars working on different aspects of voter turnout who are particularly interested in exploring new avenues of research. In addition, coauthored papers with researchers with a psychology background are particularly welcome. We

will select a group which is balanced in terms of seniority, gender and geographical origin. Researchers of Eastern and Southern European countries are strongly encouraged to apply.

Proposals should include the title, name of authors, institutional affiliation and an abstract with a maximum of 400 words. They are to be submitted by email to both organizers.

Workshop directors

Aina Gallego is adjunct professor and postdoctoral researcher and at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She has recently completed her doctoral dissertation on inequalities in voter turnout. Her work focuses on the relationship between contextual and individual characteristics on turnout, and on the impact of new information and communication technologies on political participation.

André Blais is professor in the department of political science at the Université de Montréal. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada and a research fellow with the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship (CSDC), the Centre interuniversitaire de recherche en économie quantitative (CIREQ), and the Center for Interuniversity Research Analysis on Organizations (CIRANO). He is past president of the Canadian Political Science Association. His research interests are elections, electoral systems, turnout, public opinion, and methodology.

References

- Alford, John R. and John R. Hibbing. 2007. "Personal, Interpersonal, and Political Temperaments". *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 614: 196-212.
- Barrick, Murray R. and Mount, Michael K. 1991. "The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Job Performance: A Meta-analysis". *Personnel Psychology* 44 (1): 1-26.
- Caprara, Gian Vittorio et al. 2006. "Personality and Politics: Values, Traits, and Political Choice". *Political Psychology* 27 (1): 1-28.
- Denny, Kevin and Doyle, Orla. 2008. "Political Interest, Cognitive Ability and Personality: Determinants of Voter Turnout in Britain". *British Journal of Political Science* 38 (2): 291-210.
- Fowler, James H. 2006. "Altruism and Turnout". *The Journal of Politics* 68 (3): 674-483.
- Fowler, James H. and Kam, Cindy D. "Patience as a Political Virtue: Delayed Gratification and Turnout". *Political Behavior* 28 (2): 113-128.
- Hayes, Andrew F., Scheufele, Dietram A. and Hoge, Michael E. 2006. "Nonparticipation as Self-censorship: Publicly-observable Political Activity in a Polarized Opinion Climate". *Political Behavior* 28 (3): 259-283.
- John, Oliver P. and Srivastava, Sanjay. 1999. "The Big Five Trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and theoretical perspectives". In Lawrence A. Pervin and Oliver P. John (Eds.) *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research* (2nd ed.) New York: Guilford Press, pp. 102-139.
- Jost, John T. 2003. "Political Conservatism as Motivated Social Cognition". *Psychological Bulletin* 129 (3): 339-375.
- Mondak, Jeffery J. and Halperin, Karen D. 2008. "A Framework for the Study of Personality and Political Behavior". *British Journal of Political Science* 38 (2): 335-362.

- Mutz, Diana C. 2002. "The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science* 46 (4): 838-855.
- Saucier, Gerard and Goldberg, Lewis R. 1998. "What is Beyond the Big Five?" *Journal of Personality* 66 (4): 495-524.
- Saulsman, Lisa M. and Page, Andrew C. 2004. "The Five-factor Model and Personality Disorder Empirical Literature: A Meta-analytic Review". *Clinical Psychology Review* 23 (3): 1055-1085.
- Ulbig, Stacy G. and Funk, Carolyn L. 1999. "Conflict Avoidance and Political Participation". *Political Behavior* 21 (3):265-82.